while it contributed perhaps little to the marketed stocks of food-stuffs, had at least the result of bringing scores of thousands of acres of waste land into production, of harnessing the latent horticultural abilities of townsmen to the task of food-growing, and of ensuring a supply of potatoes and fresh vegetables for nearly one and a half million households.

2. RATIONING

Shortage of food-stuffs

The problem of maintaining a sufficient food supply was by no means confined to the task of increasing the home output. At its best—and this best was only reached in the last year of the War—our home production covered only a part of our consumption, and the remainder had to be provided by foreign purchase and importation. Our shipping was shrinking, and the demands of our Allies were increasing, and it became essential for us to exercise a strict supervision over our stocks, and take drastic steps to ration their distribution, so as to ensure that if few enjoyed abundance, none should go hungry.

Mr. Runciman's unpopularity

The policy of food control and rationing was highly uncongenial to our national temper, and had to be developed carefully and cautiously. Probably Mr. Runciman voiced the natural instinctive attitude of most people when, speaking in a debate on food prices in the House of

Commons
on i yth October, 1916, he declared :—

> " . . . The one thing that we ought to avoid in this country is, from any cause whatever, to put ourselves into the position of a blockaded people.